

IDEAS / DEVELOPMENT

- ✓ **CLEAR, FOCUSED**
- ✓ **THEME**
- ✓ **SELECTED DETAILS**
- ✓ **DEVELOPED**
- ✓ **EXPERIENCE**
- ✓ **INSIGHT**
- ✓ **WHOLENESS**

The ideas are the heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, together with the details that enrich and develop that theme.

IDEAS & CONTENT

(DEVELOPMENT)

- ▣ **THE TOPIC IS NARROW AND MANAGEABLE**
Ralph Fletcher: "The LARGER the topic, the smaller you write."
- ▣ **A CLEAR, CENTRAL THEME DRIVES THE WRITING**
- ▣ **READER'S QUESTIONS ARE ANTICIPATED & ANSWERED**
- ▣ **LOTS OF SHOWING (SPECIFICS) RATHER THAN TELLING (GENERALITIES)**
- ▣ **QUALITY OF DETAILS MATTERS MORE THAN QUANTITY-ACCURACY COUNTS!**

KEY QUESTION:

Did the writer stay focused and share original and fresh information or perspective about the topic?

IDEAS AND CONTENT

We don't want (the writer) to describe every ride at Disneyland, or tell us that the Grand Canyon is awesome... If one of the rides at Disneyland got stuck, or if somebody fell into the awesome Grand Canyon, that would be worth hearing about.

-William Zinsser

Ideas and Content is what you have to say—the reason for writing your paper. Everything about your writing begins with that message. If you can choose your own topic, pick something important to you, that you know a lot about. If someone picks the topic for you, look for a way to connect it to your own experience. That way, you can use what you know.

This is one of the secrets—keep it small. If your topic is too big (like “Animals of Africa”) you'll wind up trying to tell too much and not be able to focus on any one idea long enough to make it clear. Skinny it down (“Why Lions Hunt in Pairs”) so you can handle it. Put in the kind of details to show you pay attention to the world and notice how it works.

Surprise your reader with what you know. Don't spend time on the things that anyone else could write. Don't say, “Cooking in a restaurant can be hard work.” Even people who don't cook can figure that out. Instead, tell what goes on in the kitchen if an angry customer sent the food back. That would be an interesting insight!

One more hint: Make your ideas crystal clear. Avoid general statements like “Our trip was exciting.” Exciting how? Instead, say “I chased two very hungry black bears away from our camping supplies.” Specific details that help the reader picture what is happening can make or break your writing.

Human beings have a great need to represent their experience through writing. We need to make our truths beautiful.

-Lucy McCormick Calkins

TRAIT : IDEAS AND CONTENT

RATING OF 5 (STRONG): This paper is clear, focused, and interesting. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme or story line. Ideas are fresh and original.

- The writer seems to be writing from experiences and shows insight: a good sense of how events unfold, how people respond to life and to each other.
- Supporting, relevant, telling details give the reader important information that he or she could not personally bring to the text.
- The writing has balance: main ideas stand out.
- The writer seems in control and develops the topic in an enlightening, entertaining way.
- The writer works with and shapes ideas, making connections and sharing insights.

RATING OF 3 (DEVELOPING): The paper is clear and focused. The topic shows promise, even though development is still limited, sketchy or general.

- The writer is beginning to define the topic, but is not there yet. It is pretty easy to see where the writer is headed, though more information is needed to "fill in the blanks."
- The writer does seem to be writing from experience, but has some trouble going from general observations to specifics.
- Ideas are reasonably clear and purposeful, even though they may not be explicit, detailed, personalized, or expanded to show a depth of understanding.
- Support is attempted, but doesn't go far enough yet in expanding, clarifying, or adding new insights.
- Themes or main points seem a blend of the original and the predictable.

RATING OF 1 (BEGINNING): As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning from the text, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy details. More than one of the following problems is likely to be evident:

- Information is very limited or unclear.
- The text is very repetitious, or reads like a collection of random thoughts from which no central theme emerges.
- Everything seems as important as everything else: the reader has a hard time sifting out what's critical.
- The writer has not yet begun to define the topic in a meaningful or personal way.
- The writer may still be in search of a real topic, or sense of direction to guide development.

IDEAS AND CONTENT (DEVELOPMENT)

5 This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.

- The topic is narrow and manageable.
- The writer seems to be writing from knowledge or experience; the ideas are fresh and original.
- Insight—an understanding of life and a knack for picking out what is significant—is an indicator of high level performance, though not required.
- Relevant, telling, quality details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.
- The reader's questions are anticipated and answered.
- Reasonably accurate details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.

3 The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.

- It is pretty easy to see where the writer is headed, though more information is needed to “fill in the blanks.”
- The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.
- Ideas are reasonably clear, though they may not be detailed, personalized, accurate or expanded enough to show in-depth understanding or a strong sense of purpose.
- Support is attempted, but doesn't go far enough yet in fleshing out the key issues or story line.
- The writer generally stays on the topic but does not develop a clear theme.

1 As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning from the text, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy or missing details. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:

- The writer is still in search of a topic, brainstorming, or has not begun to define the topic in a meaningful, personal way.
- Information is very limited or unclear.
- The text may be repetitious, or may read like a collection of disconnected, random thoughts.
- Everything seems as important as everything else; the reader has a hard time sifting out what the writer is trying to say.

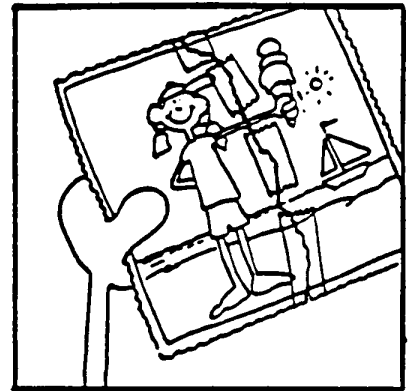


IDEAS AND CONTENT

5 PAPER - FOCUSED, CLEAR, AND SPECIFIC

My writing is full of the kinds of details that keep the reader's attention and show what is really important about my topic.

- I know a lot about this topic, and when someone else reads it, they'll find out some new or little-known information.
- I made sure to show what was happening ("The wildly spiraling tornado aimed straight for our barn") rather than telling what happened ("It was scary").
- I filled my paper with interesting tidbits that make reading it fun and lively.
- I made sure my topic was small enough to handle. "All about baseball" was too big – I changed it to "How to steal a base."
- I could easily answer the question, "What is the point of this paper/story?"



3 PAPER-SOME REALLY GOOD PARTS, SOME NOT THERE YET

The reader usually knows what I mean. Some parts will be better when I tell just a little more about what is important.

- Some of the things I said are new, but other things everyone knows already.
- Some details I have used are pretty general, like: "Her hat was nice," or "It was a sunny day."
- I think my topic might be too big and I got bogged down trying to tell a little about a lot instead of a lot about a little.
- Sometimes I was very clear about what I meant, but at other times, it was still fuzzy

1 PAPER-JUST BEGINNING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT I WANT TO SAY.

When someone else reads my paper, it will be hard for them to understand what I mean or what it is all about.

- I haven't shared much information. I guess I don't know enough yet about this topic to write about it.
- My details are so vague it is hard to picture anything.
- I'm still thinking aloud on paper. I'm looking for a good idea.
- Maybe I'll write about this, but then, maybe I'll write about that...

IDEAS AND CONTENT

5 IT'S CLEAR, FOCUSED, & JAM-PACKED WITH DETAILS.

- You can tell I know a LOT about this topic.
- My topic is small enough to handle.
- Every point is clear.
- The paper "shows"- It doesn't "tell."

3 IT HAS ITS INTRIGUING MOMENTS, BUT IT COULD USE SOME DETAILS.

- I know just enough to write.
- Some of my details are too general.
- My topic might be a little too big to handle.
- Now and then it grabs your attention.

1 I'M JUST FIGURING OUT WHAT I WANT TO SAY.

- I just don't know enough about this topic yet.
- It's hard to picture anything.
- I'm still thinking on paper-looking for an idea.

IDEAS

-THE MESSAGE-



IDEAS IN CONTEXT



he best ideas come from our own lives; from the unusual and the everyday; from the simple things we do without hardly thinking about them, to the most complex and profound experiences that stay with us forever. But just writing up your life doesn't quite do it. There has to be some purpose; the reader has to sense that the writer is writing for a reason; that there's something specific, important, and meaningful the writer is trying to get across; something that says: "Hey, you! Read this. It's important."

The main theme

The Day I Went Down Sand Hill

One thing that changed my life forever would have to be the day I went down sand hill. It was summer, and like most summers it was stiflingly humid.

It all started about 8:00 AM. It was hot enough to fry bacon on the sidewalk, not to mention my brain, so I went to ask my mother if I could go down to Church Lake. She didn't see any reason not to go, so she said it was all right.

I asked Anthony if he wanted to come with me and he did.

Both of us, in a fit of excitement, raced for our bikes in anticipation of the cool slap of water against our bodies.

We had no idea that something really bad was going to happen so we raced ahead to see who would get there first. He was in the lead, ahead of me about 3 feet when I noticed that the big hill was approaching.

We stopped at the top of the hill and looked down at the curving surface of the road.

Excitedly we both took off down the hill, our bodies stiff with adrenaline, and the pure glory of going 40 miles per hour on our bikes. The wind hit our faces with soothing coolness as we raced down the hill, but then I noticed that I was about to crash in to a corner.

In a fit of panic I slammed on the brakes, in hopes of escaping the fate of crashing, but the tire locked up, and I started to skid out of control.

I fell off my bike and started using my bare leg to stop me from crashing into the ditch, but as most people know, skin, blood, and muscle don't make good brakes.

As I was tearing up my leg, my life seemed to flash before my eyes. Bits of memories crammed in between my screams of anguish and pain.

When I approached the bottom I stopped sliding. I got up and took a look at my leg. There where a perfectly good leg had been was a bloody mess with pieces of road bonded in with muscle tissue.

Staring with horror I screamed. A passerby heard me and saw my leg. All the while, Anthony just stared at me like the dolt that he is.

The guy that saw me took us home. Now every time I approach a hill I am cautious.

A nice image. Even though it's a cliché it still works pretty well.

Nice elaboration moves the story along and sets up the climax.

Strong details in the form of images help the reader see and "feel" the experience.

Details that entertain the reader and enhance our understanding of the story.

The moral of the story.

~ IDEAS ~

A piece that is strong in ideas moves beyond “telling” into the realm of “showing.” A book that is well-written sends you away with a feeling that you actually knew the characters or had seen the setting.

EXAMPLE:

Jane dressed in an unusual way.

TO:

Jane came to school today in pink and white polka dot leggings and a blue and green paisley shirt. The twelve inch purple feather sticking straight up from her orange hat almost kept me from noticing the army boots on her feet.

Without over doing the details the second paragraph gives us a vivid picture of Jane's unusual clothes. I would have never guessed what she was wearing. It also has that “gotcha” quality – I couldn't stop reading. I wanted to know exactly what she was wearing because I could just see her strutting down the halls.

TELLING EXAMPLES

CAN YOU TURN THESE INTO SHOWING EXAMPLES?

1. The room was a mess.
2. She was a kind person.
3. He had a temper.
4. The situation was frightening
5. He felt depressed.
6. The storm was violent.
7. The dog looked dangerous.
8. She was a good problem solver.



ALTERNATIVE

Have students, in groups, make up their own “telling” examples, then exchange with another group and turn them into “showing” examples. Share the results and talk about the differences between showing and telling—and the impact on both IDEAS and VOICE.

~ IDEAS ~

MINILESSON:

SHOWING VERSUS TELLING

We often tell our students “Show me—don’t TELL me!” But do they know what we mean by this? Not always. It’s a little elusive. We want to *see* characters in action. We want to picture them for one thing, but we also want to *see* them solving problems, coping with life, acting it out, for only then can we get inside their skins, figure out their inner motivations, and identify with them.

“Aunt Mabel is nice” *doesn’t* mean much. But suppose we discover that Mabel rarely loses her temper, even in heavy traffic; cooks dinner for the family, even when her feet hurt; grows her own flowers to make bouquets for her friends; and uses her day off to do volunteer work at the local park. Now we’re beginning to feel we know Mabel a little— and can even predict what she might do in other situations.

Students often feel that if they say, “Bob is interesting,” “Sandra is smart,” or “Jean is my friend” (plus the dreaded “She’s always there for me”) they have told us a great deal in only a few words. It’s a little disappointing to discover that writing isn’t this *easy*, but the truth is that generalities like nice, fun, good, special, interesting, and smart are a poor substitute for the anecdotes and examples that turn bland generalities into snapshots of real life.

In writing about his grandmother, author and teacher Donald Murray works hard to show, not just tell. In his wonderful book *Write to Learn* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1989), he shares a revealing example of the difference. You might share Murray’s example with your students, then ask them either individually or in pairs to try their hand at showing, not telling—using one of our examples, one of your own, or one from your students’ writing.

You learn to write by writing...The only way to learn to write is to force yourself to produce a certain number of words on a regular basis.

-William Zinsser

On Writing Well, Second edition, page 53

Murray provides us with this sample of “telling,” one that looks familiar to readers of student essays:

My grandmother was a very brave little girl (page 142)

It seems straightforward enough, easy to understand. But does it really tell us anything about Grandma? We might think so, until we compare it to Murray’s “showing” example:

One day when my grandmother was a little girl she and her friends cut across a pasture on the way home from school. When a bull charged them she turned, got her friends behind her, pulled out her long sewing scissors from her school bag, and stuck them up the nostrils of the bull. He didn’t bother them anymore. (page 142)



Notice that Murray does not need to even use the word “brave” in this example. We discover this for ourselves-not to mention Grandma’s resourcefulness (how handy that she was armed with scissors) and impressive selflessness (did she really put herself between her friends and the bull?). This is a grandmother we’d like to hear more about-and isn’t that the whole idea?

You can encourage your students to go from telling to showing by practicing a few examples of their own, either individually or with a partner. Here are a few story starters. You could make up others, or take them right from the pages of student writing, textbooks, novels, etc.



TELLING EXAMPLES

Transform each telling example to a showing example by adding critical detail and action that conveys the idea without stating it outright.

- ▶ Paul's room was messy.
- ▶ Gloria really was not a cook.
- ▶ Bill was frightened of cats.
- ▶ Amber was uninhibited.
- ▶ Frank felt suddenly shy.
- ▶ Ramona was physically fit.
- ▶ The dog seemed aggressive.
- ▶ It was a pleasant day.
- ▶ A hard rain fell.
- ▶ I could tell the cat did not like me.
- ▶ The tennis player was skilled.
- ▶ Roger knew how to be quiet.
- ▶ The film was enjoyable.



Be sure you take time to read showing examples aloud. Hear the differences.

SIX-TRAIT MODEL FOR WRITING

Think of a favorite or memorable piece of writing. It could be a favorite book, special greeting card, poem, article, etc. It could be something you remember reading, receiving from someone else, or even writing yourself.

What makes this piece of writing special?

Why is it memorable?

What characteristics or special "traits" does it have?

WRITE YOUR IDEAS BELOW.

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

5.)

My memorable piece of writing is:

SIX TRAIT WRITING WARM-UPS

TRAIT #1: IDEAS

	PREPARATION	EXERCISE	FOLLOW-UP
1.	Write on the board: "Why I Don't Have My Homework"	List a few possible reasons students could come up with for not having homework in on time. Have students add to the list. Encourage "imaginative" reasons.	Talk about the way imaginative ideas make a topic more "fun".
2.	Write on the board: "Why I'm Late for School"	List a few possible excuses. Have students add to the list – the more imaginative, the better.	Talk about using the imagination to add interest to a simple topic.
3.	Write on the board: "My Favorites"	Share with students some of your favorites: places, activities, foods, people, songs, books, etc. Have them create their own lists.	Save the lists in their writing folders.
4.	Write on the board: "That Makes Me Mad!"	Tell students some of the things that make you mad and then have them create their own lists. Share ideas.	Save the lists in their writing folders.
5.	Read aloud Joan Walsh Anglund's "A Friend is Someone Who Likes You"	Have students list all the different kinds of friends they have or can think of (older, younger, pets, toys, etc.) Talk about the qualities that make a friend.	Save the lists in their writing folders.
6.	Read aloud Joan Walsh Anglund's "Love Is"	Talk about the many forms love can have. Have students list all the feelings and acts of kindness they can think of that are expressions of love.	Save the lists in their writing folders.
7.	Write a nonsense word on the board – i.e., "gerlplotz"	Ask students to write a brief advertisement that would convince someone to buy a gerlplotz. Read ads aloud to one another.	Talk about what makes ads convincing.
8.	Tell students: "You have a broken blatnik. What are you going to do about it?"	List on the board all the things students suggest doing for a broken blatnik. Draw attention to range of suggestions. Ask them what part their imaginations played in their suggestions.	Talk about the use of imagination to fill in the blanks.
9.	Read Shel Silverstien's poem "I Cannot Go To School Today" aloud.	Have the children list all the imaginary ailments they would use to convince their mothers that they couldn't go to school.	Talk about how the imagination adds fun to writing.
10.	Write on the board: 1. What 2 nd Graders Know 2. What 6 th Graders Know 3. What 9 th Graders Know	Ask students which topic they are the most capable of writing about. Ask why; Ask why writing about one of the others would probably be too difficult for them.	Talk about the importance of knowing about what you write about.
11.	Write on the board: "What I'd Like to Change about School"	Tell students some of the things you'd like to change and then have them create their own lists. Share ideas.	Save the lists in their writing folders.
12.	Write on the board: "Five Good Uses for a Pocket"	Have children each make a list of the five best uses they can think of (limit it to five). Share ideas. Ask students to think about which ideas appealed to them most – and why.	Contrast ideas with imagination and those with little thought.
13.	Write on the board: 1. The Scariest Halloween 2. Radishes 3. How to Sharpen a Pencil	Ask Students which story they'd want to read. Ask why. Have them suggest titles of stories they wouldn't want to read. Then list titles of stories they would want to read.	Talk about the importance of having an interesting topic to write about.

IDEAS

ANY ACTIVITY THAT ALLOWS STUDENTS TO PRACTICE...

Prewriting

Generating ideas from thought/experience

Borrowing ideas from other writers

Keeping writer's notebooks

Knowing the purpose for writing

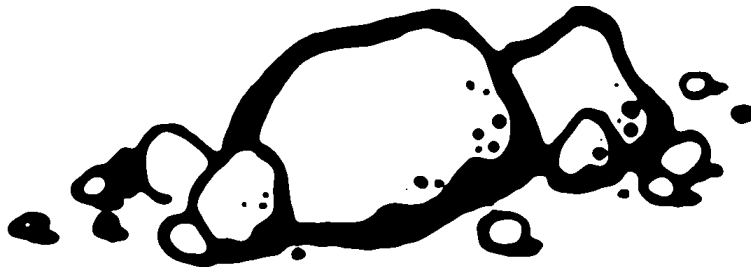
Moving from broad topic to focused theme

Learning to observe carefully

Developing thinking skills (comparison, analysis, inference)

1. THE ROCK

Students bring a favorite rock to class (it's OK to find one enroute!) and select a partner. One person from each pair gets one minute to talk about his/her rock-then it's the other person's turn to talk for one minute. After talking, students write for two minutes, then share what they have written in pairs, small groups or with the large group (as appropriate). Here's a great resource to stimulate thinking: Everybody Needs a Rock by Byrd Baylor.



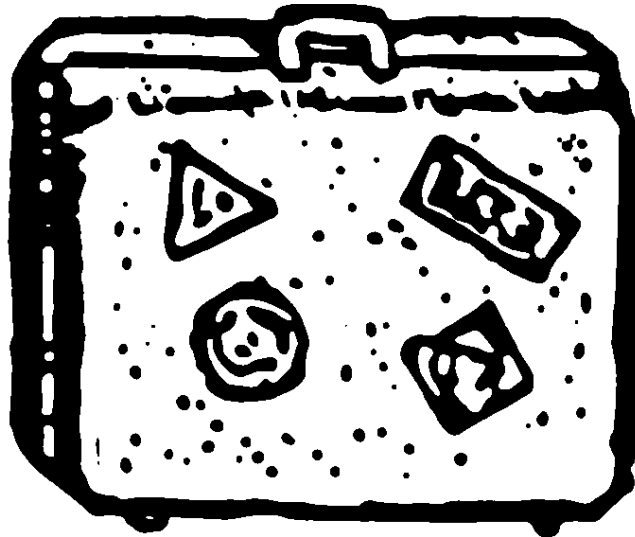


2. POPCORN REMINISCENCE

Pop some corn during class. While the corn is popping and the sounds and aroma fill the room, ask students to jot down bits of memories they associate with popping corn. At the end, they can write a story relating to popping corn. Or, perhaps they can write “10 Ways to Improve the Taste and Texture of Pop Corn.” Or how about “Why Does Pop Corn Cost So Much at the Movies?” – or – “The Real Difference Between Air Popped and Oil Popped Corn!” Lots of topics can emerge here. Just allow the students to get into it before they begin to write. The smell and taste should do the trick! Great resource: *The Popcorn Book* by Tomie de Paola (interesting facts, data, history—even recipes)

3. GARBOLGY

Create a collection of “clean” garbage – the sort of leftovers you might expect to find in a vacated but uncleaned hotel room. Or dig around in your purse or wallet for some stuff – a cryptic note, a used bottle, a piece of a list, pins, pen with a name on it, etc. Put the collection together and try to visualize the person behind the clutter. Create stories, bits and pieces of

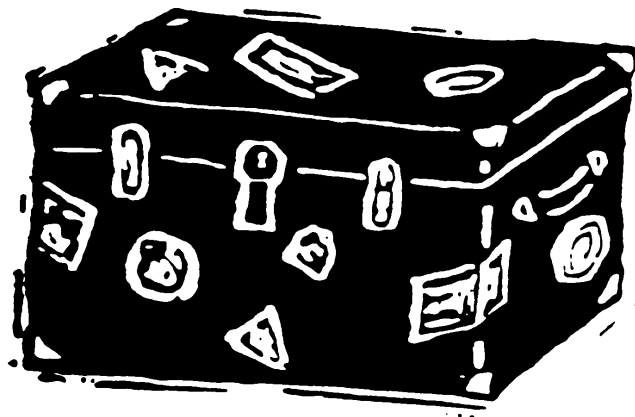


scenarios about the person and the events. Invite small groups of students to make inferences about who this person might be. Write stories about the person, create biographies or character sketches—even pictures. Good resources: *Travel with Charley* by John Steinbeck (a chapter in his novel does exactly this – but appropriate for older students only) or *Motel of the Mysteries* by David Macaulay (great for all ages).

USE PICTURE BOOKS TO TEACH THE TRAIT OF:

IDEAS AND CONTENT

- ▶ Make a list of things to write about from ideas found in picture books
- ▶ Compare the way two authors write about the same idea
- ▶ Count the number of words in the average picture book and discuss how long it really takes to tell a story or explain an idea well
- ▶ List topics that seem too big, trite, or overused and look for ways authors of picture books have handled these topics well
- ▶ Select a topic from a content area class and create a picture book to teach someone else what has been learned
- ▶ Keep a writer's notebook of potential writing topics found in picture books



IDEAS

All the Places to Love
 Alphabet City
 The Always Prayer Shawl
 Amelia's Notebook
 Antics!
 The Armadillo From Amarillo
 Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky
 Benito's Dream Bottle
 A Child's Portrait of Shakespeare
 Day of the Dead
 Dear Mr. Blueberry
 The Dragon and the Unicorn
 A Drop of Water: A Book of Science and Wonder
 Everybody Needs a Rock
 Fables
 Flute's Journey: The Life of a Wood Thrush
 Go Home, River
 Grasper
 Great Crystal Bear
 Home
 Home Place
 I Am the Dog/I Am the Cat
 I Hate to Read
 I Know What You Do When I Go To School
 I'm in Charge of Celebrations
 Jumanji
 Kofi and His Magic
 Letters From Felix
 Li'l Sis and Uncle Willie

Lightning
 Macbeth for Kids
 The Magic School Bus: At the Waterworks
 Miss Nelson Is Back
 Miss Rumphius
 Mississippi Beau
 Motel of the Mysteries
 Nurse Lugton's Curtain
 On the Day You Were Born
 The Other Way to Listen
 Panther Dream: A Story of the African Rain Forest
 Ragtime Tumble
 Roxaboxen
 Sitti's Secret
 Sophie and Lou
 The Squiggle
 The Story of Ruby Bridges
 A Street Called Home
 A Sweet, Sweet, Basket
 Tomorrow's Alphabet
 Tree of Life: The World of the African Baob
 Twelfth Night for Kids
 Verdi
 Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge

Resource:
 Picture Books
 An Annotated Bibliography
 With Activities For Teaching
 Writing By Ruth Culham

Dear Friend,

Two years I took a trip with a family. We went all over the country. This is letter telling you about the trip.

First we went to Denver, Colorado. My Aunt from New Mexico came up too. My Uncle Bill and Aunt Rose two children named Fern and Heather. They are now five and two. We swam and went to the club. We had a lot of fun. From Denver, Colorado we went to Amarillo, Texas to visit Grandpa and Grandma. We always eat at cafeterias with all the different kinds of food. It's really fun. There are also a lot of museums we go to.

From Amarillo, Texas, we went to Jackson, Mississippi. There are also a lot of museums there. We visit my Aunt Lois and Uncle Milton with there five kids. They are now Jean 14, Michel 12, Robin nine, Sare five, Kelly two.

From there we went to Indiana. Where we see Iris, Grandpa, Uncle Arnie, Tante Rubey, Aggie, Uncle Roger, Tante, Kate, Uncle Mark, Tante Janna, Milly, Chris, and Benjy. There we mostly played. Then we came home because we were tired.

Sincerely,
Jennifer

“The Dress”

My Grandma Fay is the person who, aside from my parents, has influenced me the most. She's not the kind of grandma who knits all day and ignores her grandkids. Grandma Fay didn't go to college, or have a fancy education, but I always leave her with a new knowledge of something.

For instance, when we went shopping for a dress for a Valentine's banquet, we both went straight to the same dress. It was the most expensive one they had, and, knowing it was terribly over-priced, we tried to talk each other into not liking it.

“Do you like it?” she asked, she knew I loved it, but asked anyway.

“Well...” I tried desperately to find something wrong with the dress.

“It is a little resque.” That was a flat-out lie. Who was I kidding? This was not a suggestive outfit.

“Good! Let's go.” she took me by the arm and we went to look at the other dresses.

After what we had just seen, nothing looked good. Too fancy, not fancy enough, too pink, too young. This was getting us nowhere. (Finally, we stumbled back on the dress and I tried it on.)

It was better on than it was off. But it wasn't worth that much. Period. I forced myself to be good about not getting it, and tried not to act disappointed. I got my regular clothes on, and when I came out of the dressing room, calm and collected, there was Grandma Fay paying for the dress!

Well, I don't really know what the moral to this story is, it was just a shopping trip and, even though I loved her more than I could ever say or express in my life, I knew that was how much she loved me. She didn't say anything, but I knew.

AIRPLANE RIDE TO ADULTHOOD

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M DOING THIS, I THOUGHT LOOKING OUT THROUGH THE ROUND PLASTIC WINDOW. FROM A FEW THOUSAND FEET ABOVE THE GROUND, THE GREEN AND GOLD OF OREGON'S FIELDS BECAME A QUILT, EMBROIDERED BY A CREATIVE HAND. THE SKY ABOVE THE AIRPORT, AS WE TOOK OFF, HAD BEEN GLOOMY FOR JUNE; THE CLOUDS HUNG LIKE DISMAL RUMORS OF A RAINY DAY.

BUT I HAD, I THOUGHT, LIVED TOO LONG IN OREGON TO BE DAMPENED BY WET WEATHER WITH DIFFICULTY, I SUPPRESSED THE URGE TO JUMP UP AND DOWN FOR JOY - THE JOY OF FLYING ALONE, PLAYING AT BEING A RESPONSIBLE ADULT AMONG THE OTHER ADULTS ON THE FLIGHT TO SAN FRANCISCO.

AS IT MATCHED MY MOOD, THE AIRPLANE ROSE, AND WE BLEW ABOVE THE CLOUDS. I SHALL NEVER FORGET THAT FEELING OF BEING SCREENED FROM THE EARTHBOUND WORLD WITH THE WHITE CLOUDS LIKE FLUFFY FROSTING ON AN ANGEL FOOD CAKE. THE SUN SHONE IN THROUGH THE WINDOW LIKE A WARM SMILE.

THE AIRLINE STEWARDESS ASKED ME IF I WANTED SOME SODA. ACCEPTING A GLASS OF SEVEN-UP, I REALIZED THAT THIS PLANE RIDE, FOR ALL I WAS ALONE, WAS NOT DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS I HAD TAKEN WITH MY FAMILY. I HAD BEEN AFRAID WHEN I FIRST HEARD THAT MY AUNT HAD INVITED ME TO SPEND THE WEEKEND WITH HER IN SAN FRANCISCO. I HAD REMEMBERED THE COMPLEXITY OF TICKETS, GATES, AND SUITCASES. NOW, SITTING IN THE PADDED BLUE SEAT OF THE AIRPLANE, I REALIZED HOW EASY IT IS TO FLY.

THE CLOUDS LAYER CLEARED GRADUALLY, BELOW US, AND THE BROWN HILLS OF CALIFORNIA STRETCHED BENEATH ME LIKE THE RIDGES AND VALLEYS OF A CHILD'S SANDBOX.

SOON, SAN FRANCISCO ITSELF ENTERED MY SIGHT. THE SEATBELT SIGN WAS ON, AND I SMILED AGAIN AT THE SIMPLICITY. IF FLYING WAS AS EASY AS THIS . . . OR PERHAPS THE SMILE WAS FOR THE CITY ITSELF. IT LOOKS SO BEAUTIFUL FROM THE AIR! SOON I WOULD BE IN IT, SHARING THE THINK MONEY AND IMAGINATION CAN CREATE.

THE AIRPLANE CIRCLED SEVERAL TIMES OVER THE BAY, AND I FELT A MOMENTARY TWINGE OF ANXIETY. THE LACK OF LAND BENEATH US REMINDED ME SUDDENLY OF THE LITTLE TALK THEY GIVE YOU ABOUT FLOATATION DEVICES. BUT THE AIRPORT IS ON THE BAY, AND BEFORE I KNEW IT, THE PAVEMENT WHIRLED BY, UNDER OUR WHEELS.

I FEEL, AS I WALKED THROUGH THE BROWN CORRIDOR, THAT THIS FIRST PLANE TRIP WAS A RITE OF PASSAGE BETWEEN DEPENDANT CHILDHOOD AND TREATMENT AS A RESPONSIBLE, MATURE PERSON.

My favorite time of year (Summer Time)

During summer I did a lot of drastic, exciting, and thrilling things. On the first month of summer I did a lot of tanning and swimming, sometimes would go horseback riding.

The second month was drastic I went shopping, and out of town but the best thing was my friend's envited me to a back to school pool party. I decided to go, and had a blast. We were all dancing, talking and sharing secrets with each other. Also I went up to enchanted forest where I rode go-cart's and water-slides. I went down some rides inside of enchanted forest that were scarier than ever.

Now finally the third and final month, I went to a beach party, at harris beach were we played volleyball and the guys surfed. We had a picnic and listened to music. I met this guy Sean-Blonde hair, blue eyes, and muscular, he came from California of course, we had fun together, but the fun had to end the next day we had to go to school and Sean had to go back to California. Everyone had to go home because it was getting late. So everyone went home, and said good-bye. Me and Sean gave eachother a kiss and left. That was the last time we saw each other.